



Choosing an Arborist

Selecting the Right Arborist for the Job

There are a variety of things to consider when selecting an arborist including:

- **Membership in professional organizations** – such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the Tree Care Industry Association, or the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA)-demonstrates a willingness on the part of the arborist to stay up-to date on the latest techniques and information.
- **Check in the phone directory yellow pages** for those arborists who advertise as ISA Certified Arborists or display the official logo of the ISA Certified Arborist. Certified arborists are experienced professionals who have passed an extensive examination covering all aspects of tree care.
- **Ask for proof of insurance** and then phone the insurance company if you are not satisfied. A reputable arborist will have personal and property damage insurance as well as worker's compensation insurance. Many homeowners have had to pay out large amounts of money for damages caused by uninsured individuals claiming to be a tree experts. You could be held responsible for damages and injuries that occur as a result of the job.
- Some governmental agencies require contractors to apply for permits and/or to apply for a license before they are able to work. **Be sure they comply with any local, state, provincial, or national law that governs their work.**
- **Ask for references** to find out where the company has done work similar to the work you are requesting. Don't hesitate to check references or visit other worksites where the company or individual has done tree work. Remember, tree care is a substantial, long-lasting investment; you would not buy a car without a test drive!
- **Unless you know and are comfortable with the arborist, get more than one estimate.** You may have to pay for the estimates, and it will take more time, but it will be worth the investment.
- **Be wary of individuals who go door-to-door** and offer bargains for performing tree work. Most reputable companies are too occupied to solicit work in this manner. Improper tree care can take many years to correct itself, and in some cases, it can never be corrected. Are you willing to take that risk with your valuable investment?
- **Good arborists will only perform accepted practices.** For example, practices such as topping a tree, removing an excessive amount of live wood, using climbing spikes on trees that are not being removed, and removing or disfiguring living trees without just cause are unnecessary.
- **Don't always accept the low bid.** You should examine the credentials and the written specification of the firms that submitted bids and determine the best combination of price, work to be done, skill, and professionalism to protect your substantial investment.
- **Get it in writing.** Most reputable arborists will have their clients sign a contract. Be sure to read the contract carefully. Don't be afraid to ask questions, such as:
 - When will the work be started and completed?
 - Who will be responsible for clean-up?
 - Is this the total price?
 - If I would like more to be done, what is your hourly rate?

The above is an excerpt from the ISA consumer tree care website www.treesaregood.com